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SENSITIVE

USDOC PLS PASS NOAA FOR INTL AFFAIRS RIPPI  
STATE FOR OES/OA ARNAUDO/TIRPAK;OES/EGC  
STATE ALSO PASS NSF/INT/JSLIMOWITZ  
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TAGS: [TPHY](#) [SENV](#) [KSCA](#) [FR](#)

SUBJECT: MARINE SCIENCE RESEARCH: NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR  
U.S.-FRENCH UNDERTAKINGS

This message contains a sensitive but unclassified  
paragraph 8. Please handle accordingly.

Summary

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[11.](#) (U) On March 18, EST Science Counselor and the NSF regional representative for Europe met with officials of the French Institute for Research into Sea Resources (IFREMER - [www.ifremer.fr](http://www.ifremer.fr)) to review IFREMER's priorities and discuss means to promote bilateral cooperation (NOAA/IFREMER), notably in climate science. While IFREMER is undergoing institutional changes, including the appointment of a new president, IFREMER officials expressed a strong willingness to enhance current, often informal, joint work. An IFREMER-hosted workshop could be a first step. NOTE FOR U.S. RESEARCHERS: IFREMER has extended a new call for proposals on tsunami-related research for 2006 utilizing its vessels. End summary.

Marine Science research in France/key role of IFREMER

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[12.](#) (U) Marine science research in France is conducted by a variety of organizations--universities, CNRS (National Center for Scientific Research, [www.cnrs.fr](http://www.cnrs.fr)), IRD (Research Institute for (Overseas) Development, [www.ird.fr](http://www.ird.fr)), CETMEF (marine technology, [www.cetmef.equipement.gouv.fr](http://www.cetmef.equipement.gouv.fr) - French only), Meteo France (French Meteorological Office, [www.meteo.com](http://www.meteo.com)), IPEV (polar science, [www.ipev.fr](http://www.ipev.fr)), CNES (French Space Agency, [www.cnes.fr](http://www.cnes.fr)), and SHOM (French Naval Hydrographic and Oceanographic Service, [www.shom.fr](http://www.shom.fr) - French only). Marine research covers almost all fields, notably numerical ocean modeling, understanding of marine ecosystems, marine geoscience, and submarine research technologies. This combined effort includes over 3000 researchers and technicians. Extensive EU collaboration accounts for 40 percent of funding. Over 50 percent (staff and budget) of French research in marine science is conducted at IFREMER.

[13.](#) (U) Created in 1984, IFREMER is a semi-public research establishment of industrial and commercial nature that reports to four ministries: Research, Ecology, Agriculture/Fisheries, and Transport and Housing. Eighty percent of its 150 million euro budget comes from the Research Ministry and 20 percent comes from services performed for other government organizations such as coastal monitoring stations. IFREMER facilities (1700 employees, including 320 ship management staff) are located throughout France and the French overseas territories in the Caribbean, the Pacific, and the Indian Ocean. IFREMER's objectives are: 1) identify, evaluate, and forecast exploitation of marine resources; 2) develop monitoring and forecasting methods for protecting and enhancing coastal environments; and 3) encourage economic development of marine ecosystems.

Currents of Change

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[14.](#) (U) In January 2005 IFREMER reorganized from groupings by technical competencies into a system of programs containing smaller projects to insure close and efficient collaboration on specific scientific priorities. According to IFREMER officials, these multidisciplinary projects aim at solving "complex" issues related

to climate, biodiversity, and the environment, and are more widely open to national and international scientific partnership. IFREMER's high level thematic areas are now:

- large equipment in support of oceanographic research
- current fleet includes seven vessels (four of which deep-sea vessels), two manned submersibles, and one remotely-operated vehicle for deep sea explorations)
- monitoring and exploitation of coastal seas
- monitoring and optimization of aquaculture
- sustainable exploitation of fisheries
- exploration and exploitation of deep oceans
- the mechanisms, evolution, and forecasting of ocean currents and marine ecosystems.

15. (U) IFREMER's new president: Politician-in-charge. Jean-Yves Perrot, a magistrate with the French "Cour des Comptes" (similar to the U.S. General Accounting Office) has been appointed to replace Jean Francois Minster at the head of IFREMER. In contrast with his predecessor, Perrot has no scientific background. The impact of the arrival of this "non-scientist" at the head of IFREMER remains to be seen. (Biosketch and comment see para 8).

#### NOAA/IFREMER Cooperation: Intensifying Cooperation

16. (U) Currently, interaction between IFREMER and U.S. researchers is conducted at the initiative of individual scientists. According to IFREMER officials, IFREMER researchers are ready for more ambitious approaches. The next step would be the selection of "domains" for joint research projects. IFREMER's head of International Affairs will seek his hierarchy's approval to host a workshop to:

- cross examine scientific projects to confirm interest on both sides; and
- devise a set of tools to make these partnerships more efficient/easier to conduct.

A possible specific issue of interest to both sides is operational oceanography. IFREMER officials commented that discussions at both scientific and institutional levels appear necessary and will require the identification of specific entities (e.g., the U.S. Embassy) to act as "facilitators."

#### Tsunami-related research

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17. (U) IFREMER officials informed ESToff that IFREMER is currently revising its 2006 planning. Following the December 2004 events, IFREMER has decided to issue a new call for research projects focusing on tsunami issues and geosciences. This new call is opened to U.S. scientists.

#### IFREMER's new President: a bureaucrat takes the reins

18. (SBU) Jean-Yves Perrot, 48, was appointed on March 24 to replace Jean Francois Minster (who was candidate to his own reelection) at the head of IFREMER. A graduate of the prestigious French school for Political Sciences ("Sciences Po"), and a former student of the Ecole Nationale d'Administration (ENA), he worked for two years (2002-2004) as Director of Cabinet of Agriculture Minister Herve Gaymard, before following him as "special adviser" at the Finance Ministry in November 2004. He was previously Director for International and Economic Affairs at the Ministry of Public Works, Transports, Housings and Tourism. Gaymard's sudden resignation in February 2005 left him "unemployed." Perrot also holds a number of political posts: he is notably the Mayor of Marly-le-Roi, a medium-sized city in the western suburbs of Paris and sits in the Ile-de-France Regional Council. Note: Perrot's nomination at the head of IFREMER took the science community by surprise and raised turmoil among researchers' unions. The latter commented that it is the first time in France that a politician, without any scientific or technical background has been appointed to head a public research establishment. They further noted that Perrot is not likely to renounce his political mandates and will be at best a "part-time" director. During their meeting with EST officers, IFREMER's officials underscored that the newcomer had spent two years in a top

position at the Ministry of Agriculture, which also oversees fisheries. End note.

#### Comment and Next Steps

19. (U) IFREMER is a prestigious French public research establishment with competent research personnel and impressive equipment for ocean research. IFREMER officials seek opportunities to enhance their organization's relationships with scientists and similar institutions in the U.S., particularly NOAA, with which it shares a rich past. EST officer shared with IFREMER several possible topics for collaboration provided in advance by NOAA counterparts. IFREMER will study these and respond to them and possibly advance other topics in the coming months. They consider that a workshop to discuss these subjects and modalities for approved collaborative projects makes sense. In the interim, the Embassy will be pleased to serve as a facilitator. For example, should NOAA wish to bring additional proposals to IFREMER's attention, the Embassy would be pleased to assist. From the Embassy's perspective, collaborative work between U.S. climate science agencies such as NOAA and IFREMER, perhaps under the GEOSS framework, would serve as concrete evidence of U.S.-French collaboration to address the climate change phenomenon. LEACH